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Viewing cable 10CARACAS187, Increased Harassment of Approved Cuban Medical Parolees

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#10CARACAS187**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
10CARACAS187	2010-02-12 20:20	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Caracas

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.semana.com/nacion/wikileaks-venezuela-caracas-sucursal-habana/158411-3.aspx>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000187

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/12

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SUBJECT: Increased Harassment of Approved Cuban Medical Parolees

REF: 09 CARACAS 1374; 09 CARACAS 442

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, DOS, POL; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Harassment of Cuban Medical parolees has increased significantly since December 2009. Recent media coverage has exacerbated difficulties experienced by parolees

attempting to exit Venezuela. These Cuban medical professionals who staff President Chavez's flagship medical service program for the poor, Barrio Adentro, report that they inflate their patient numbers and are required to conduct political work. Cubans who have abandoned their Barrio Adentro clinics find it difficult to legalize their presence and benefit from basic services. Most parolees do make it out of Venezuela, but some undergo a harrowing ordeal before being able to exit. End Summary.

HARASSMENT OF CUBAN MEDICAL PAROLEES

¶2. (C) In the last two months, Cubans approved for humanitarian parole through the Cuban Medical Professionals Program (CMPP) at Embassy Caracas have experienced increased difficulty leaving Venezuela through the MaiquetC-a (Caracas) airport. Almost all experience some sort of harassment, ranging from passports being confiscated to physical and verbal abuse. Many of those who are allowed to board their flights to Miami are only able to do so after paying sizeable bribes (generally \$700-\$1000) to Venezuelan immigration officials or Cuban officials who are said to be working at the airport. From 2009-2010, more than 20 parolees have been detained for extensive questioning, which has reportedly included verbal and physical abuse, confiscation of official and regular passports, strip search, and threats of deportation. Most of those Cubans detained are not allowed to proceed to their flights. However, there have been no reports of these parolees actually being deported to Cuba, and they have all been released after several hours of detention. In fact, most parolees eventually make it out on a subsequent attempt.

MEDIA COVERAGE MAKES IT WORSE

¶3. (C) The problem has been exacerbated by January 2010 news coverage of the CMPP in U.S., Venezuelan, and Colombian media outlets. Harassment has increased significantly since the first article was published in the Miami Herald on January 7 and was subsequently picked up by Globovision and other media outlets in Venezuela. Some CMP parolees have chosen to transfer their cases to Colombia rather than take the risk of leaving via Venezuela. Others have simply traveled to Colombia and departed using the travel documents issued in Caracas. Since 2009, 10 of those unable to fly have crossed the border to Colombia and have flown to Miami from BogotC!. There are no reports of harassment once parolees are in Colombia.

FAKE STATISTICS AND POLITICAL WORK

¶4. (C) Post collected the following anecdotal evidence recounting the difficulties applicants encounter during and after the mission. While in the mission, applicants live off a very a meager stipend (967 Bolivares Fuertes per month, approximately \$372 USD at the official exchange rate) and work six days a week. Doctors are required to see 50-70 patients daily, a number unattainable for most doctors who, in reality, average 10-20 patients. Almost all applicants claim they are forced to doctor their statistics to meet these requirements. Many applicants also describe mandatory political work, especially around elections, when applicants are instructed to read propaganda in clinics and gather potential voters. In addition, they are often required to staff politically charged health drives on Sundays. (Note: Some Venezuelans have accused Barrio Adentro of being primarily a political program. See Ref A for more details. End Note.)

CUBANS' PLIGHT AFTER ABANDONING THE MISSIONS

¶5. (C) Applicants encounter severe difficulties once they abandon the mission. At this point, the applicants are considered illegal immigrants and are subject to deportation. Most find it difficult to ever legalize their stay in Venezuela or benefit from basic services. One applicant gave birth the day after her parole was accepted but has been unable to get a Venezuelan passport for her child. Officials told her that they are forbidden to give passports to "deserters." Other Cubans have not been able to legally marry in Venezuela. While there is no confirmed deportation of a parolee, an applicant was recently sent back to Cuba as a precautionary measure when his girlfriend abandoned the mission.

CMPP NUMBERS TO DATE

16. (C) From 2006 to 2007, 497 Cubans applied for parole through the CMPP at Embassy Caracas. 407 of those applicants were approved, 70 were denied, and 8 cases are still pending. In 2008, there were 201 applicants, 154 approvals, 28 denials, and 8 cases are still pending. In 2009, Embassy Caracas received 237 applications, 161 of which were approved, 36 denied, and 40 still pending. There have not been any approvals or denials yet in 2010. Since Post began to use YY foils instead of transportation letters in March 2009 (due to fraud concerns), 277 of such foils have been issued. It should be noted that the vast majority of our approved CMPP applicants actually do successfully leave Venezuela. Most successfully leave on their first attempt flying out of Venezuela with a visa foil or travel letter. Those that are initially detained have apparently often been able to bribe their way out on a subsequent attempt. The rest, as noted above, have made the trek to Colombia and been able to get on a flight to Miami.

17. (C) COMMENT: Post generally receives CMPP approvals in large batches. Given the parole requirements of traveling within 21 days of YY foil issuance, many parolees attempt to exit Venezuela during the same time period. This creates a situation whereby these applicants will travel in waves. Post is unaware whether harassment is the result of deliberate Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) guidance or based on the actions of individual immigration officers. Certainly, the recent publicity about Cuban doctors bribing Venezuelan and Cuban officials has put an unwelcome spotlight on the program. Yet it does seem clear that the GBRV does not yet systematically attempt to detain all parolees. Finally, the information provided by the applicants during the interview process appears to corroborate claims from many Venezuelans that the Barrio Adentro program is as focused on political propaganda as it is on improving health.
DUDDY